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THE

Knickerbocker's Address



TO

THE STUYVESANT PEAR TREE:

RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO THE

Knickerbockers of Manhattan Island,

BY

HENRY WEBB DUNSHEE,

I.

Fam'd Relic of the Ancient Time,¹ as on thy form I gaze,
My mind reverts to former scenes, to spirit-stirring days:
Guarding their sacred memories, as ashes in an urn,
I muse upon those good old times, and sigh for their return.

II.

The scenes by which thou'rt compass'd now, have little charm
for me ;

They speak not of the ancient time, as thou, time-honored tree :
I, therefore, close my eyes against these forms of brick and stone ;
Then, boldly, to my mental eye, thou loomest up alone.

III.

Yet not alone, for clust'ring near, with gladsome heart, I view
The hale companions of thy youth, that round about thee grew,
Laden with bounteous stores of fruit,—low bending to the ground,
The due reward of culturing care, with which their boughs are
crown'd.

IV.

And far and wide, on ev'ry side, as on some knoll I stand,
I view a beautiful expanse of rich, productive land,
Dotted or margin'd pleasantly, with shady tree or grove,
Enliven'd by the songs of birds, which 'mid their branches rove.

V.

Nature is here in all her prime;—the woods, the dell, the plain ;
The streamlet with its merry dance, the fields of golden grain ;
The meadows sparkling with the gems of early morning dew ;
While fragrance breathes from lovely flow'rs of rich and varied hue.

VI.

They seemingly have spent in grief, the lone, lone night—for one
Whose presence is their life and joy ; but now the uprisen Sun
Stoops down to kiss away the tears, which glisten in his ray ;
They blushing, lift their lowly heads, and hail him God of Day.

VII.

The kine are grazing listlessly, or saunt'ring towards the mill,
That stands so boldly 'gainst the sky, on yon romantic hill;
Whose arms are whirling constantly, while busy folk within,
Make melody in strains that rise above the rolling din.²

VIII.

In yonder fields, the harvesters are gathering the grain,
Some rake, some bind, some pitch, some load, while sweetly
their refrain
Salutes the ear, as now they sing, with cheerful, blended voice,
While with rejoicing Nature they exultingly rejoice.

IX.

From yonder dustless mansion comes, its lord, whose heart is seen
Portray'd upon his countenance; of firm, majestic mien;
Laden with Nature's precious gifts, he scans each orchard tree,
And slowly treads the well-worn path that leads direct to thee.

X.

With joyous eye, while grateful thoughts his noble heart expand
He looks on thee, his favorite tree, brought from the Fatherland
And lives again in former scenes, when life was in its prime,
And finds the memories of his youth still undestroy'd by Time.

XI.

In silence deep he muses long on his eventful life,
So fraught with stirring incidents of home and foreign strife:
With these contrasts his present lot, so full of hope and joy,
With scarce of tithe of former cares to harass or annoy.

XII.

With pipe in mouth he now reclines beneath thy welcome shade,
And feels that all his fostering care for thee hath been repaid,
And dreams, perchance in waking mood, when thou alone wilt be
The only relic left midst Art—THE OLD MEMENTO TREE.

XIII.

Anon, a group of happy youth, from school restraint set free,
Comes shouting round him merrily, in wild and joyous glee:
One, by consent, thy trunk ascends, thy burden'd boughs to shake,
While all, of thy delicious fruit, most eagerly partake.

XIV.

Hoboocken, now, their master comes, devoid of frown and rod,³
And with the Governor reclines upon the velvet sod:
Together they enjoy the sport, again are young in heart,
Till, warn'd by day's decline, they each, for happy home depart :

XV.

For in a gorgeous couch the sun has calmly sunk to rest,
Behind Wiehackan's tree-crown'd hills, with gemm'd and crimson'd
crest !
And Night, o'er forest, glade and stream, her dusky mantle throws,
While Silence, beckoning to Fatigue, invites to sweet repose.

XVI.

My heart exults in scenes like this, so beautiful—so still,
Save Nature's pleasant voices heard in th' low murm'ring rill;
The cricket's shrill, incessant chirp; the sighing of the trees,
Whose leaves are dancing ceaselessly, in evening's gentle breeze.

XVII.

Now Sewan-Hacky's⁴ wave-like hills, with mellowed tints are
crown'd,
While silvery beams fall silently upon the groves around,
Till gradually the landscape wide is bath'd in soften'd light,
And Luna rules in gentleness—the Goddess of the Night.

XVIII.

Such scenes as these, and more than these, for ages thou hast seen;
Thou saw'st when Spring adorn'd the earth with robes of beau-
teous green,
When Summer spread, with lavish hand, her treasures o'er the
plain,
And bounteous Autumn offer'd up her stores of fruit and grain.

XIX.

When Winter reign'd and cloth'd the earth with robes of virgin
white,
And ruthless drove o'er hill and dale with unrelenting might,
When the ethereal elements in fearful conflict met,
Then thou, old tree, defiant stood'st—and there thou'rt standing yet.

XX.

The forests dense that graced the land ere Hudson plough'd the
wave,
Which once were travers'd fearlessly, by the Manhattan brave ;
The orchard trees, around whose base, such golden fruits were
strewn,
Are gone—all gone—forevermore ;—and thou art left alone.

XXI.

Thou saw'st when the Usurper came, the Nation to despoil,
Of the dominion exercised upon her rightful soil:⁵
Thou saw'st the throng that gather'd round to carry to the grave,
Thy lord, the last Dutch Governor—the honest and the brave:

XXII.

When Leisler ruled, who died by fraud—when Kidd the Rover
sail'd ;
And when the negroes at the stake in direful accents wail'd;
When infant Liberty assay'd to seek her just redress,
And Zenger gain'd for aftertimes the Freedom of the Press:⁶

XXIII.

When the bold Sons of Liberty the people's cause espous'd,
Destroy'd the tea, condemn'd the stamps, and patriot zeal arous'd ;
When Tories fled clandestinely, suspicious of the day ;
And laurels crown'd the THE HUNDRED on the shores of Deutel Bay.⁷

XXIV.

Perchance thou saw'st the patriot band, with dauntless Captain
Sears,⁸
Who with his lead, triumphant rode, amidst the people's cheers ;
Or gav'st thy fruit to please the taste of Clinton and his corps,
Who ruled, where British power will rule, triumphant, nevermore.

XXV.

For 'twas thy glory to behold, (the conflict nobly won),
The entry of that noble band, led on by Washington;
When the sad sighs from Wallabout were hush'd by the applause
Which fill'd the sky above the land where triumph'd Freedom's
cause.

XXVI.

How vast the changes Time has wrought in this thy island home:
The handful has become a world, to which th' oppress'd may come:
The rivulet, once pure and small, is now the turbid stream ;
Then, Nature rul'd all absolute, but Art is now supreme.

XXVII.

Could'st thou but speak, I'd question put, concerning him of yore,
Who priz'd thee, ere he brought thee from his distant, native shore;
Who nurtured thee so carefully, till thou hadst taken root,
And then reclined beneath thy shade, while feasting on thy fruit.

XXVIII.

Fam'd trees there are in other lands, rever'd in hoary age,
To which the traveller fondly turns upon his pilgrimage:
While gazing on their stately forms, his thoughts are backward
cast,
And tho' he breathes the present age, he lives within the Past.

XXIX.

Thus to thy shrine, thou ancient tree, will Knickerbockers hie;
And standing on their native soil, beneath their native sky,
In contemplative mood recall, those Names of sterling worth,
Through whom they trace their ancestry—the Noble Men of earth.

XXX.

Fam'd less for show, than solid parts; of staid, reflecting mind;
Fam'd less for vain, than useful arts; magnanimous and kind;
Respected and belov'd at home—fear'd and admir'd abroad;
True to a fault with fellow man—and faithful to their God.

XXXI.

Each year we see thy goodly boughs adorn'd with mellow fruit,
Proclaiming to the world that thou hast still a living root :
Thus may the branches of the Stock renown'd on Hist'ry's page,
Bring forth the fruits of sterling worth through every passing age.

XXXII.

Tho' shielded from the Vandal's touch by iron band and bar,
In ev'ry Knickerbocker's heart there's that more potent far,
Which, circling thee in its embrace, shall guard thee day by day,
Against all enemies save one, stern Nature's law—Decay.

XXXIII.

O ! may thy boughs with blossoms white and living fruit be grac'd;
While Knickerbocker blood can be by Knickerbockers trac'd;
Yea, may'st thou from thy mother earth, by time nor man be torn,
Till light no more shall bless the land where Liberty was born.



NOTES.

1. STANZA I.

"A Pear tree, imported from Holland in 1647, by Stuyvesant, and planted in his garden, yet flourishes on the corner of Thirteenth Street and Third Avenue, the only *living* relic which preserves the memory of the renowned Dutch governor. I saw it in May, 1852, white with blossoms; a patriarch two hundred and five years of age, standing in the midst of strangers, crowned with the hoary honors of age, and clustered with wonderful associations. An iron railing protects it, and it may survive a century longer."—Lossing *Pict. Field Book of the Revolution*, ii. p. 784.

To the author of this interesting work, the writer is indebted for the pictorial view of the Pear Tree, which accompanies this address.

2. STANZA VII.

The Dutch are still noted for beguiling the hours of labor with song.

3. STANZA XIV.

The location of one of the Schools of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church, at this period, was near the site of the present Tompkins' market. It was sustained for the benefit of the youth in the vicinity of the Bouwery, and for the children of the farm servants of the Governor, who was a decided friend of education. The school-master's name was Harman Van Hoboocken.

4. STANZA XVII.

This was the Indian name of Long Island.

5. STANZA XXI.

The author of the *History of New-York*, in commenting upon the reduction of New-Netherland, remarks—"The flag of England was at length triumphantly displayed, where, for half a century, that of Holland had rightfully waved.
* * * "This treacherous and violent seizure of the territory and possessions of an unsuspecting ally, was no less a breach of private justice than of public faith."—Vide Brodhead's *Hist. State of New-York*, p. 745.

6. STANZA XXII.

Vide Lossing *P. F. B. Rev.*, ii. pp. 785 and 786.

7. STANZA XXIII.

For an interesting account of the Sons of Liberty, and of the active part taken by them in advancing the growth of democratic principles, vide Loss. F. B. Rev., ii. pp. 787-792.

For an account of the destruction of the Tea at the wharf in New-York, by the Mohawks, vide Val. Man. Com. Coun., 1855, pp. 458, 459.

Contemn'd the Stamps. Vide Lossing, ii. pp. 788, 789—et Val. Man., 1855, pp. 436-444.

Tories fled clandestinely. Of this, History records numerous instances. It is related, among others, that "Dr. Cooper, the President of King's (now Columbia) College, and a Decided Loyalist, becoming alarmed, fled to Stuyvesant's house, near the East River, where he remained concealed until an opportunity was afforded of escaping to the *Asia*, man of war."—Vide Lossing, ii. 794.

"Deutel (now called Turtle) Bay, is a small rock-bound cove of the East River, at the foot of Forty-seventh Street. Here the British had made a magazine of military stores, and these the Sons of Liberty determined to seize. Under the direction of Lamb, Sears, Willett and McDougal, a party procured a sloop at Greenwich, (in Connecticut,) came stealthily through the dangerous vortex of Hell Gate at twilight, and at midnight surprised and captured the guard, and secured the stores, a part of which was sent to the grand army at Boston, and a part to the troops then collecting on Lake Champlain to invade Canada; they also seized a tender, with stores, belonging to the *Asia*, and took possession of provisions and clothing deposited by the government, at Greenwich village, on the west side of the city."—"These acts were done under the immediate sanction of the committee of One Hundred, whom the patriots regarded with more confidence than they did the Provincial Congress."—Vide Loss. F. B. Rev., ii. p. 795.

8. STANZA XXIV.

Isaac Sears was a leading spirit in the troublous times preceding the Revolution.

"Rivington, whose influence as editor of the *Royal Gazetteer*, was great, abused the Republicans with unsparing severity, and none more bitterly than Captain Sears. That patriot, fired by personal insult and political zeal, came from Connecticut, where he had gone to plan schemes for the future, with ardent Whigs, and at noonday entered the city at the head of seventy-five light-horsemen, proceeded to the printing establishment of Rivington, at the foot of Wall Street, placed a guard, with fixed bayonets, around it, put all of his types into bags, destroyed his press and other apparatus, and then in the same order, amid the shouts of the populace, and to the tune of Yankee Doodle, left the city. They carried off the types and made bullets of them." The Pear tree stood near the old post road over which he travelled.—Vide Loss. F. B. Rev., ii. p. 797.

Gen. Clinton occupied the Beekman Mansion, on the East River, for three years and six months, and traversed the post road daily on his way to and from the Fort.—*Ibid*, ii. 815.



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